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**Local Government Support
Project in Moldova**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT PROJECT IN MOLDOVA

GENDER ANALYSIS AND GENDER INTEGRATION STRATEGY



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Background

The Moldova Local Government Support Project is a four-year activity to assist Moldovan local governments in their efforts to improve service delivery to their citizenry and by so doing, prepare themselves to provide, manage, and support the increased responsibilities intended for them under the decentralization initiatives from the Government of Moldova.

According to the contract, the project is required to integrate gender consideration and disaggregate gender data at all levels of project design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. To ensure that both women and men benefit from improved local government services, in June 2012 the project undertook a rapid gender analysis to identify actions which promote gender equity and can be integrated into program design. This analysis highlights gender considerations by component and suggests measures that may be integrated into existing project activities to promote gender equity. In this analysis, gender equity is defined as fairness of treatment for women and men according to their respective needs, which may include equal treatment, or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. In the development context, a gender equity goal often requires built-in measures to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages of women. Specific measurements and monitoring are employed to ensure that at a minimum, programs, policies, and projects implemented do not leave women worse off than men in their peer groups and families and that measures are taken to compensate for historical and social disadvantages. This analysis was developed through interviews with project staff and a review of relevant project documents including the LGSP contract, the LGSP draft work plan and the USAID/Moldova Gender Assessment. The results of the staff interviews can be found in Annex A.

Moldova has laws in place to promote gender equity and over the past twenty years the country has continued to experience positive changes in increased opportunities for women. However, sufficient measures are not in place to ensure full implementation of gender equity provisions. As a result there are some barriers at the societal level which may inhibit full participation by both men and women in project activities. Such barriers include inherent biases about the aptitude of women and men related to various types of work which results in a gender imbalance in certain professions and in staffing within an organization. Women tend to be more prominent in fields such as finance or public outreach, whereas men tend to be more prominent in fields which involve technical-focused service provision work such as infrastructure upgrades for energy efficiency. Gender imbalances are also seen in the management structure of local government - although women may be prominent in administrative level positions and hold some mid level management positions, such as city council members or deputy mayors, the top level management positions in local government, such as mayors, are predominately held by men.

Another consideration to achieving gender equity are social-cultural barriers that affect women's ability to fully participate in the public sphere. While there are few acknowledged limitations on what women cannot do within the public sphere, there are strong expectations on the obligations at the household level regarding what

women should do in relation to managing and caring for the household. This so-called double burden where women work outside the home and also manage the majority of the housework may limit women's opportunities to fully participate in project activities or limit access to information about the project activities.

It is presumed that gender-related constraints in the office and household spheres vary by region and across social demographics. Such constraints are assumed to be more pronounced in rural settings, among older generations, among persons with disabilities, and among ethnic minorities. For this reason, an overarching recommendation for the project technical staff is to conduct a mini gender analysis by region to identify specific barriers by region. A sample set of questions for a mini gender analysis are included in Annex B.

At the time of writing this analysis, the project was still in the preliminary phases of implementation. As such there was not enough base-line data to provide a detailed overview of considerations and challenges to be addressed within each component. The suggested activities listed in each component area below were driven by LGSP staff recommendations on how to improve women's and men's access to and ability to participate fully in project activities. When the project conducts a full gender analysis later in the year, per the project contract, it will be possible to address more specific gender constraints and considerations, and appropriate illustrative interventions for every ask area by component. A summary of these recommendations is presented below:

Overarching activity recommendations

- ✓ Identify specific gender considerations within each project municipality through tailored mini analyses
- ✓ Ensure that gender is integrated into the local government strategic planning process, budgets and plans
- ✓ Include gender mainstreaming and sensitization in trainings and capacity building activities
- ✓ Ensure that municipal plans and reports include gender considerations
- ✓ Use the communications strategy to promote gender equity in project activities
- ✓ Coordinate gender equity approaches with other donors

Component 1: Improved Municipal Service Delivery

Gender Constraints and Considerations

The first component of the project will help local governments better understand the needs of their citizens and respond by providing better and more cost effective services. Gender equity considerations for Component 1 center on ensuring a gender balance in the strategic planning process and ensuring that services selected for support by the municipality meet the needs of both women and men in the community.

Among the services provided by local government, certain services are seen as being primarily in the “women’s domain”, meaning the services are most likely to be requested, used, and managed by women. Such services include social welfare services, education related services, and/or health related services. Other services provided by local government are seen as being more in the “men’s domain”, meaning such services are most likely to be guided, provided and informed primarily by men in the community. Such services include infrastructure related services such as waste water management or infrastructure upgrades to promote energy efficiency.

It is presumed that gender-differences in access to municipal services will likely differ depending on the region and particularly by the size of the municipality. There is a perception that gender roles and relationships in larger towns may be slightly more balanced, with women having greater access to economic opportunities and access to information. As a result of this expanded access both women and men may have more opportunities to participate in civic engagement activities. Gender roles in rural areas are likely to be more pronounced and as a result men and women may be less familiar with municipal services outside of their traditional domains.

Illustrative activities and initiatives to address gender

- **Assist local governments to integrate gender in the strategic planning process.** Provide training for meeting facilitators on how to ensure equal participation from both men and women with a focus on how to solicit input from demographic groups which may be disinclined to participate. Trainings provided to municipal staff should include a module on gender integration in municipal planning. During the planning process, measures should be taken to ensure that municipal service provision takes into account needs of underserved groups (i.e. providing day care facilities for women who come to the municipality with children).
- **Create gender sensitive communications strategies to promote gender equity.** To increase the participation of women and men in more rural settings, it is advised to use a civic education campaign which informs citizens of their rights and benefits of participation in local government activities. Materials should explain the rights and responsibilities of both women and men in decision making, emphasizing that the interventions are an opportunity to improve their living conditions rather than a threat to their status. Given that youth are more likely to adapt new behaviors that will promote gender equity, behavior change campaigns should be focus on youth.

- **Coordinate gender equity approaches with other donor projects.** Other donors are currently supporting gender equity programs in the regions where Moldova LGSP is working. Coordinating the creation of gender-sensitive materials with other donor-funded projects can bolster the project's gender equity approach and possibly used to improve access to regional and other donor funds.

Existing and potential indicators

Existing indicator: Accessibility of minimum-standard priority local government services
Potential modification: Percentage of minimum-standard priority local government services which provide services to women / traditionally disadvantaged groups.

Existing indicator: Percent of the population in assisted towns that indicate qualitative improvements in a selected service (already sex-disaggregated)

Existing indicator: Number of Municipal Strategic Plans updated or created

Potential modification: Number of Municipal Strategic Plans updated or created which include activities or interventions related to gender or that include gender considerations in the design.

Existing indicator: number of citizen feedback mechanisms institutionalized (already sex-disaggregated)

Potential new indicator: Percentage of capacity building trainings which include a module on gender integration in planning.

Component 2: Increased local revenues and improved financial management

Gender constraints and considerations

The second component of the project will help local governments make better use of public financial resources while increasing transparency on public spending decisions to help citizens better understand decisions made about municipal financial resources. The two key gender considerations under Component 2 of the project focus on how budgetary decisions are made and the process by which citizens are informed of and involved in the municipal budgeting process.

As noted earlier, certain realms of municipal government tend to have a gender imbalance in staffing – women are more likely to hold all levels of positions within finance departments and are represented on city councils whereas men are more likely to hold senior management positions (ie mayors) and/or primarily technical positions. It was beyond the scope of the current analysis to examine any possible gender-based budgeting implications based on this staffing structure, therefore it is recommended that the project consider conducting a mini-gender analysis to determine any potential gender related-impacts on the budgeting process. Sample questions for such an analysis are included in Annex B.

The second consideration for gender equity under this component area relates to the process by which men and women in the community participate in the decision making process. As noted, there are certain areas related to municipal services which are seen more as being women's responsibilities (ie the provision of social welfare services) or being primarily related to men's responsibilities (ie infrastructure or utilities services). In participatory budgetary meetings on these issues, steps will need to be taken to ensure that the voices and needs of both genders are represented throughout the decision making process. Considerations should include where and when decision making meetings take place to ensure equitable access to participate. To promote gender equity, it may be necessary for communications efforts to take into account historical imbalances and proactively seek to create a space for both women and men to provide input in areas where their voices may not traditionally be heard. Such communications efforts should ensure that citizens understand how the various municipal services affect all households and both genders – and that services are available to everyone regardless of gender.

Illustrative activities and initiatives to address gender

- **Include gender-related modules in trainings and capacity building activities.** Provide training to municipal staff on the importance of sex disaggregated data. Training should explain the how such data has the potential to benefit a range of initiatives, including how to analyze financial data to ensure that both men and women benefit from municipal services. When providing assistance to develop strategic financial plans, ensure that participants analyze the potential gender-differentiated impact of revenue raising policies.
- **Assist municipal governments in integrating gender into budgets and financial management reports.** Include concrete and time bound gender-

goals in strategic planning; this could include goals on increasing resources for underrepresented gender groups or creating a better gender-balance within the municipal structure. Ensure that municipal reporting includes a special section on how they are addressing issues identified by women. When collecting and disseminating best practices, include best practices on how municipalities are promoting gender equity.

- **Incorporate gender equity principles in municipal policies.** Development of the framework and practices on human resources management that will ensure free and non-discriminatory access through transparent competition, stability in office and career advancement opportunities for public employees, including the gender perspective (job descriptions, regulations etc.) Work with the human resources department to ensure that municipalities have policies in place along with incentives and enforcement mechanisms to make sure that the policies are being implemented.

Existing and potential indicators

Existing: Number of municipal financial staff trained on new MoF accounting standards (already sex-disaggregated)

Existing: Number of integrated communications plans adopted

Potential modification: Percentage of integrated communications plans which include a gender analysis and a plan for promoting gender equity.

Component 3: Improved Municipal Energy Efficiency

Gender constraints and considerations

In Component 3, the project will work with local governments to install or improve energy efficiency measures in public buildings which have the largest cost-saving potential for the town. Energy efficiency (EE) upgrades will be directed towards the public structures which currently account for the largest portion of the town's energy bill. Some of the structures which are assumed will require energy efficiency measures include schools and hospitals; both of which are institutions which have a predominantly female staff.

The main gender consideration for LGSP in relation to implementing Component 3 is centered around the decision making process of where, when and how energy efficiency measures will be applied. As noted by staff, much of the technical work related to the design and application of energy efficiency, such as engineers, technicians, etc, are seen as male dominated professions. However some of the key public institutions which are likely priority candidates for energy efficiency measures include institutions which are predominately staffed and managed by a female staff including schools and hospitals. It is presumed that the majority of staff and other adult end-users (parents bringing kids to school, caring for sick family members) in the institutions receiving energy efficiency upgrades are primarily female. To ensure that there is adequate buy in from the end-users during the planning phase, and to ensure that there is proper ownership and maintenance during the implementation phase, the project will need to consider how to address any gender issues during the design and implementation phases.

Beyond the cultural perceptions of who is involved in EE measures, the double-burden of women's household responsibilities may also impact their ability to participate in information-sharing or decision making meetings. Because the specific impacts of the "double-burden" are presumed to differ by location and demographics, it will be important for the project to do their own rapid analysis to identify how these barriers manifest at the local level.

Illustrative activities and initiatives to address gender

- **Promote gender equity in activity participation.** During the planning process for EE measures, a gender integration approach can include measures to ensure that both men and women are able to attend and participate in meetings by clearly communicating how both can contribute in the meeting (based on their above mentioned roles), and ensuring that the meeting facilitator(s) are trained to encourage participation from all. Given that the technical aspects of EE are considered to be a male dominated sector, communications efforts can also place a special emphasis on the relevant expertise that women play in the EE planning process - for example, they may have information on which areas of a school/ public institution could have the highest impact to receive EE measures.
- **Raise awareness of the benefits of EE upgrades targeting female end-users.** Ensure that communications about energy efficiency are targeted to the key end-users in a given public institution; this includes considerations about

where and how information is shared. For example, information on EE should be posted near markets, shops, schools and kindergartens. Language used to describe EE and any accompanying visuals should be gender-balanced meaning that language is either gender-neutral and that any project visuals include an equal number of women and men.

Existing and potential indicators

Existing: Number of people receiving LGSP supported training in energy related policy and regulatory practices (already sex-disaggregated)

Potential modification: Number of people involved in the EE planning process (disaggregate by gender)

Existing: Number of people receiving LGSP supported training in technical energy fields (already sex-disaggregated)

Existing: Number of beneficiaries with improved energy services due to LGSP assistance (already sex-disaggregated)

Annex A. Moldova LGSP Staff Gender Questionnaire

1) Describe the activities which you are responsible for implementing related to the project.

Staff responses differed by component area and each of the project component areas were covered in the interview process.

2) What types of planning assessments have been done / are planned to guide this activity? Are the responses disaggregated by male / female? Are an equal number of men and women included in the assessment process?

The project is using two key planning assessments to inform its work; the Municipal Performance Index, and the Citizen Survey, which will be conducted in the rayons with the help of local subcontractors. Staff report that both assessments include questions which are disaggregated by gender.

3) When and where will your project activities take place?

Staff responses differed by component area.

4) What are the perceived and actual roles of women and men related to the project activities?

Almost all respondents noted that within the work sphere, men and women enjoy relatively equal benefits. However, staff noted that there are more women in municipal work because there is a perception that they perform these tasks better due to the detail oriented nature of administration work and there are more men in leadership (ie mayor) positions due to the fact that local politics tend to be personality driven.

When asked why levels of public participation may be low, many respondents noted historical and cultural reasons to explain overall low levels of participation. One observation noted that low public participation may be due to past negative experience with authority, or the assumption that a person's voice would not be listened to or taken seriously. This issue of the perception of possible treatment at the local level, particularly for women who feel disempowered in other aspects of social and home life, may be an issue that has particular impact on the willingness of women to participate and voice their needs at the municipal level.

Staff noted that there is a perception that rural communities are likely to have traditional, therefore more restrictive, gender-roles than urban areas. However, staff also noted that towns in rural areas are more likely to have a higher percentage of women employed in local government. The reason for these differences should be further explored in the project's work.

In regards to perceptions about the role of women and men outside of the local government / towns, staff said that there are certain professions where men are more dominant and other professions where women are more dominant.

5) What are the perceived and actual roles of men and women as related to household and/or societal obligations?

All staff agreed that within the household, women hold a large portion of both the decision making power and responsibilities. While women are largely responsible for daily and weekly household chores, they also take the majority of decisions regarding small-resource allocation for the household. This includes making decisions about what food to buy and when, resources for the children (clothes, school items, etc), and other items that might be needed for the household. When the family needs to access social services from the town to secure these resources, women in the household are more likely to be responsible for going to the town to apply for social services.

Overwhelmingly it was agreed that while women make the majority of decisions for small-resource allocation (day to day items) in a family, larger resource allocation is discussed in a more “democratic decision” with input from both men and women. It was therefore assumed that other issues pertaining to household maintenance may have less of a gender-dimension. Because of the differing household roles, staff noted that women’s obligations related to household work may limit their career advancement opportunities, as related to their male colleagues; this perceived limit on opportunities may serve as a disincentive to fully participate in project activities. This issue appeared to be more sensitive than other questions, with respondents noting that these obligations need to be respected but not used as a handicap against women.

6) What might be the barriers that would prevent the same level of participation from men and women?

Staff noted that there have been some negative reactions to campaigns that aggressively promote women’s rights and as a result have created a resistance to “too-much” women’s empowerment. Gender integration activities which intend to increase women’s engagement in the social sphere need to promote a balance between work, social and household responsibilities – without trying to change current conditions. Many staff noted that for gender integration to work, the project will need to communicate the importance of a gender mainstreaming approach to the communities.

7) What have been successful / positive approaches used in Moldova in the past that ensure the same number of women and men have been able to participate?

The proposed gender strategy for Moldova LGSP is intended to be responsive to current conditions in Moldova and build on activities that have already shown to be successful within the Moldovan context. Responses about successful past program approaches focused on communication methods, the importance of tangible and visible results, and human resources policies which address gender equity.

Thoughtful communication about project activities was frequently cited as an important success factor for previous projects. Such communication was gender-neutral and highlighted the role of both women and men in explaining the project goals and expected outcomes. One participant noted a particularly well-done television campaign which, although it focused primarily on increasing women’s participation, highlighted outstanding rural women and the outcome of their efforts to advance their educational opportunities. The campaign was memorable both in how it was presented (on television, using well edited images) and in what it communicated (the successes of ordinary women). Another suggestion focused on successful

campaigns which emphasize women's right to different municipal services and how using these services benefit the community. Communication efforts should be careful to convey a message that respects both men and women's responsibilities and community participation benefits the community, home life and service delivery

In addition to communication about project activities, successful projects are able to demonstrate tangible results for their target communities. Visible project results which benefit issues relevant to both men and women are an important success factor for projects – and the results should not favor one gender over another.

Participants also noted that proactive approaches to encourage gender equity both in terms of participation in project activities as well as in hiring practices have been successful on past projects. To ensure gender equity, past projects have used special evaluation criteria to encourage participation from under-represented groups such as women. Other successful projects may have ensured that HR principles promoted gender equity by ensuring that HR principles promote competent staff particularly in under-represented groups and include a rationale in HR policies for doing so. However, care needs to be taken in both these measures to ensure that gender equity in participation is not done solely on a quota system but in a way that encourages equal participation from both women and men.

8) Looking forward four years to the end of the project, what will a successful project closeout mean to you? How will the project have succeeded in promoting gender equity?

Many of the staff envisioned that a successful project closeout would include many of the responses listed above, including that a project closeout would be able to demonstrate the real impact of the project's work on improving people's lives. The project's impact would meet community needs and results would be sustainable and owned by the community. An important result would be that the visible impact of improving municipal services would be recognized by the Government of Moldova and would receive acknowledgement that supporting local government was the right approach.

Annex B. Sample questions for a rapid mini-gender analysis

Access: measures if all citizens in a community are able to use the resources necessary to be fully active and productive participants. This includes access to resources, services, and information.

- Do men and women have the same opportunities to participate in formal or informal networks to share information about community initiatives or activities? This includes participation in social networks during work hours and after work.
- Do men and women have the same access to technologies and services that will improve living conditions for the family?

Knowledge, beliefs, and perception: refers to the types of knowledge that men and women can access, the cultural beliefs that shape gender identity and behavior, and how people may have different interpretations of their life based on their gender identity.

- Are there views about the types of community activities (upgrading waste water plans vs contributing to the financial planning process) which are more appropriate for women or men?
- Do men or women's perception about their rights within a community inhibit or facilitate civic engagement?
- Should gender awareness training be provided to community members to prevent unintended consequences?

Practices and participation: refers to peoples' behavior, actions and responsibilities within a community, ie what they actually do with their day, and how this varies by gender. It includes how they behave in society as well as the different ways the engage in development projects.

- How might men and women have different types of access to the communication channels that will be used to communicate about the project?
- How might women and men have different access to and participate in training sessions that are offered through the project?

Time and space: recognizes any gender differences in the availability and allocation of time and spaces (private spaces such as the household, or public spaces such parks, schools, or sports centers). This is used to understand what implications their time commitments might have on men and women's availability to participate in program activities.

- What are men and women's responsibilities in terms of child care and house work? If one group has greater responsibilities in the household, will they have enough free time to participate in project activities?
- Do women or men typically work or spend the majority of their time in locations that would make it difficult for them to participate in project activities?

Power and decision making: evaluates the ability of women and men to decide, influence, control, and enforce decisions within the social sphere. It addresses the capacity to make decisions freely and exercise power in the household, community, and municipality.

- How much power do women have to make decisions about the types of services they need?
- Do women participate actively in formal decision making structures?
- Do women and men hold an equal number of decision making positions within the municipality?